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(54) **SERVICE CONTEXT**

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G06F 17/30 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
USPC **707/722**; 707/769; 707/803; 707/809

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
USPC 707/722, 754, 769, 803, 809
See application file for complete search history.

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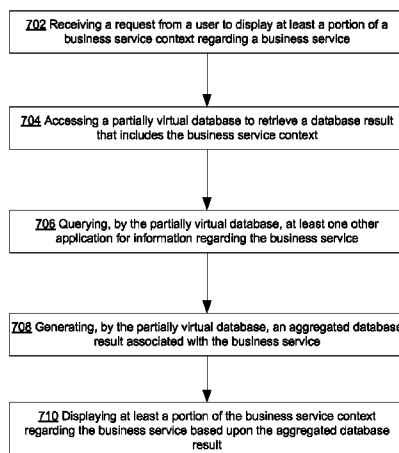
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LLP

(57) **ABSTRACT**

According to one general aspect, a method of using an applica-
tion may include receiving a request, from a user, to display
at least a portion of a business service context regarding a
business service. The method may also include receiving,
from a database, an aggregated database result regarding the
business service. The aggregated database result may include
the requested business service context. The business service
context may include information from a plurality of other
applications. The method may further include displaying a
graphical user interface element that displays at least a por-
tion of the information included by the business service con-
text.

23 Claims, 10 Drawing Sheets

700



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FIG. 1

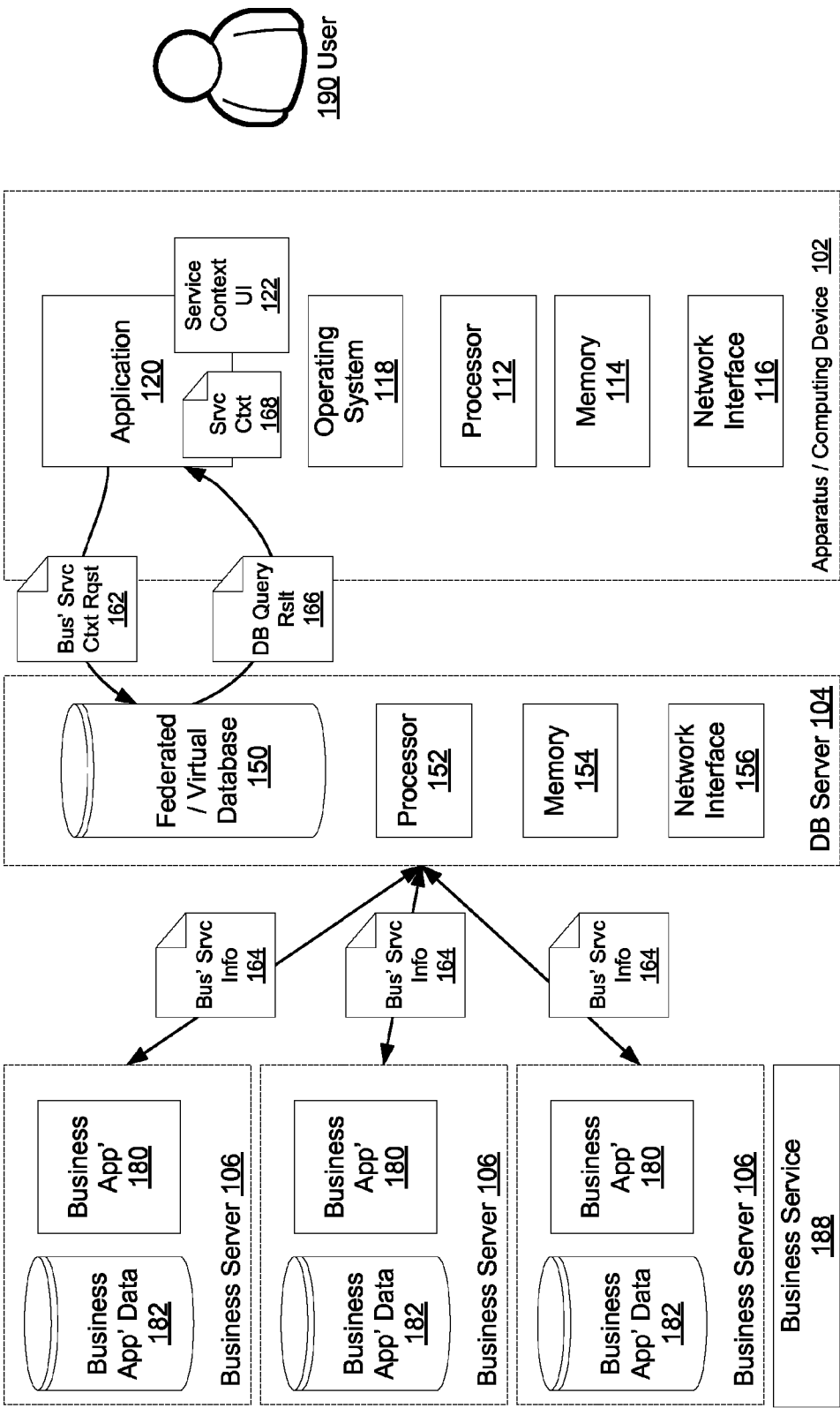


FIG. 2

200

202

BMC REMEDY IT SERVICE MANAGEMENT – Change Management
Infrastructure Change

① 133 New Broadcast

Quick Actions

- Broadcast Change
- Impact Simulator
- Select Operational
- Select Product
- Requested For
- View Calendar

Quick Links

- Categorizations
- Impacted Areas
- View Audit Log
- View Risk Report
- Financials
- Functions
- Advanced Functions
- Create Other Requests
- Consoles

Initiate

Change ID** CR000000001637

Coordinator Group** Back Office Support

Change Coordinator** Guelika Bansal

Change Location Run

Service: CR000000001637

Coordinator Group**

Change Coordinator**

Notes

Class*

Change Reason

Target Date

Impact*

Urgency*

Priority

Risk Level*

Service Status

EPD ☐ Unk Infra ☐ Network ☐

Show summary view Last update: 11/04 10:21am

Work Detail

Tasks/Phase

1 entries [returned: 3 s]

Type Sur

Requirements 2013

Next Approval Phase

0 entries [returned: 0 s]

Approv... Approvers

View Notifications

204

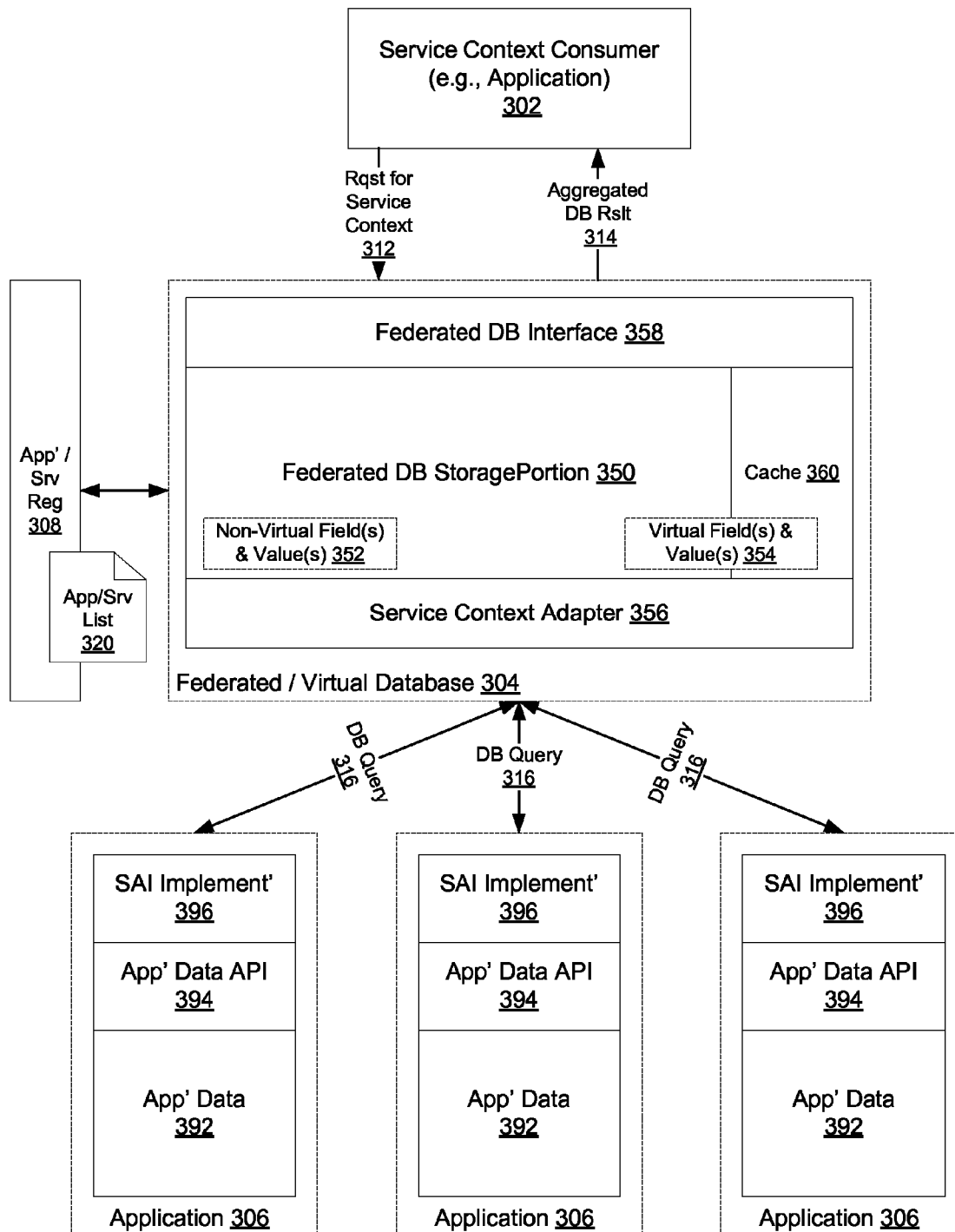
FIG. 3 300

FIG. 4a ₄₀₁

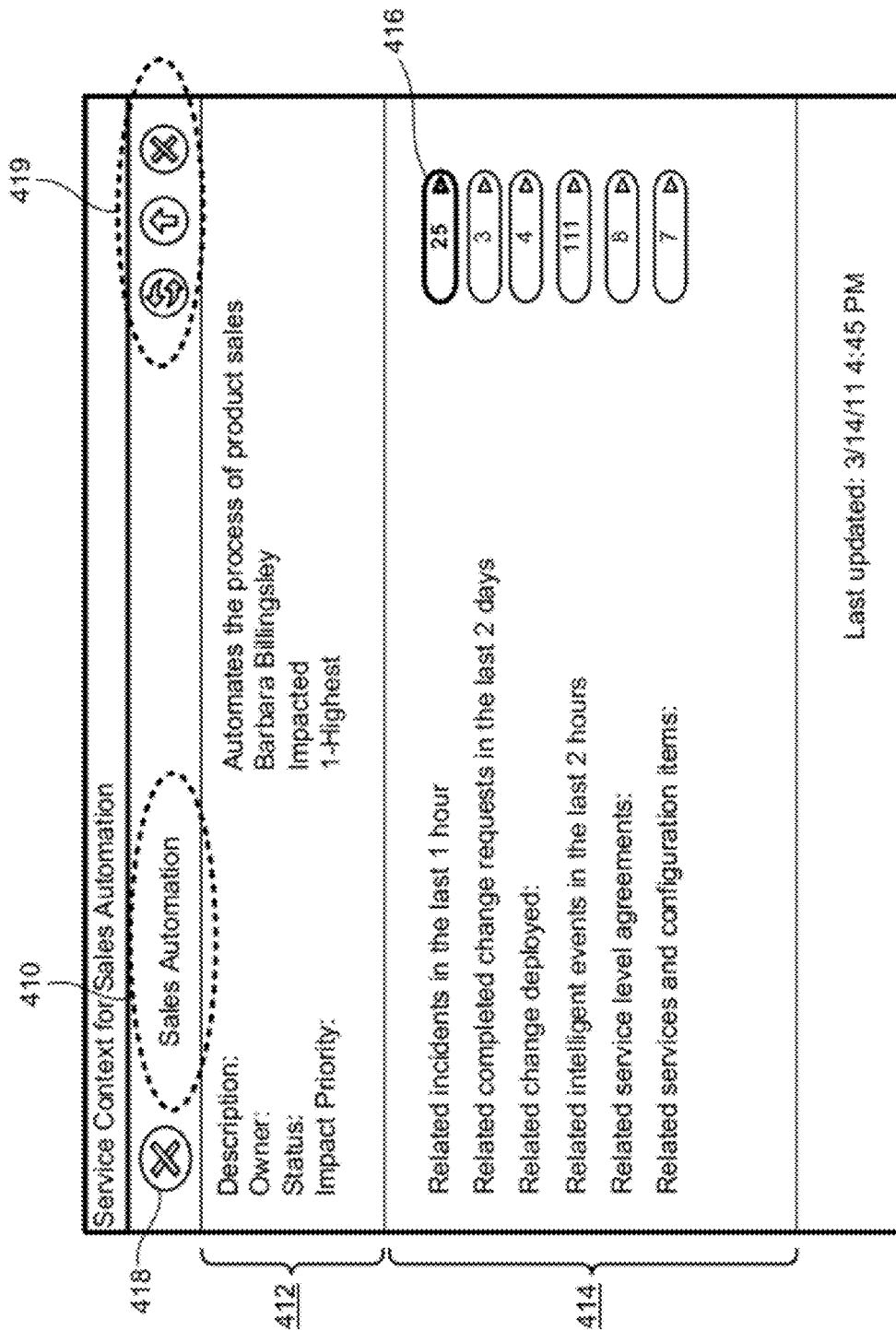


FIG. 4b ⁴⁰²

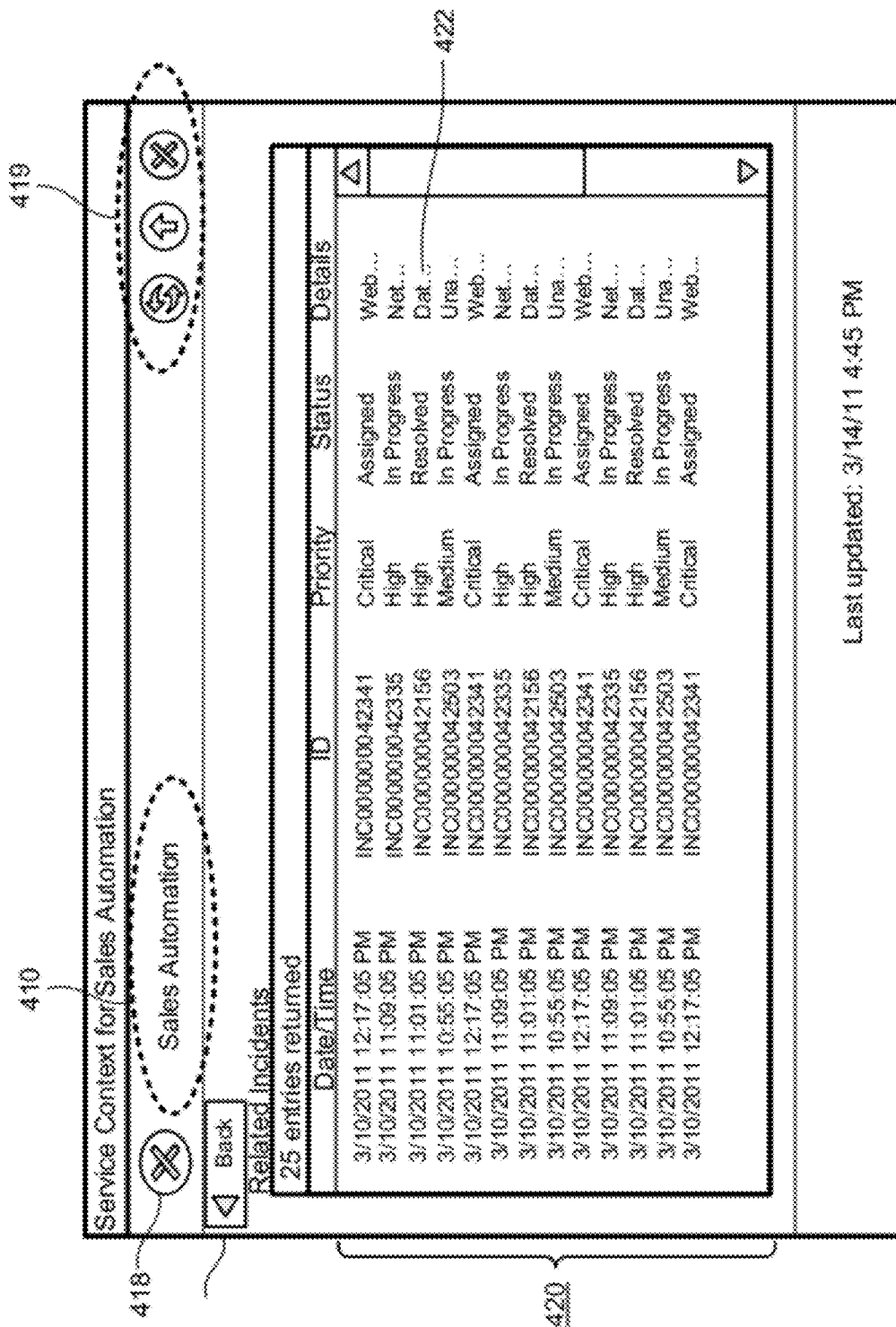


FIG. 4c 403

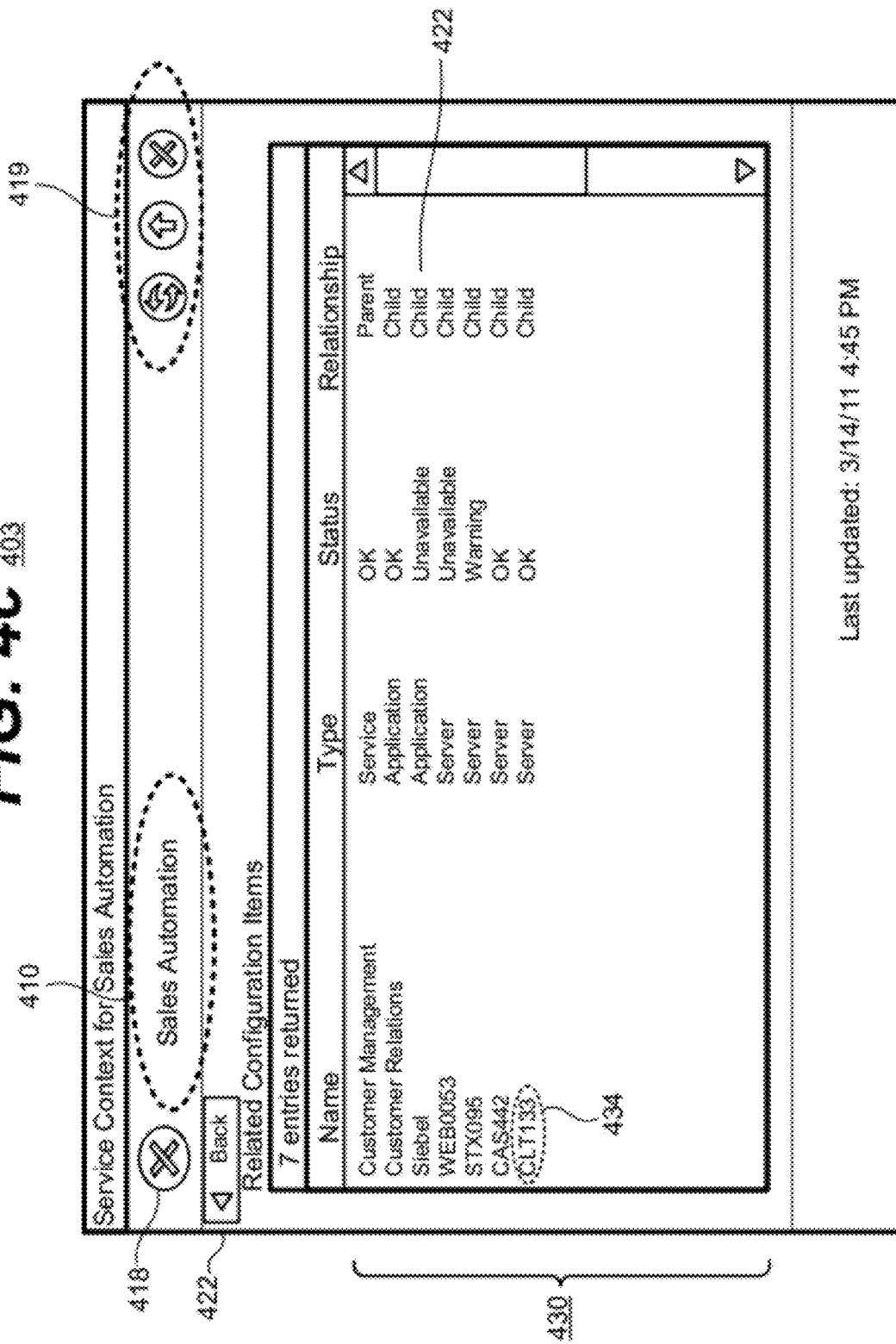


FIG. 5a
500

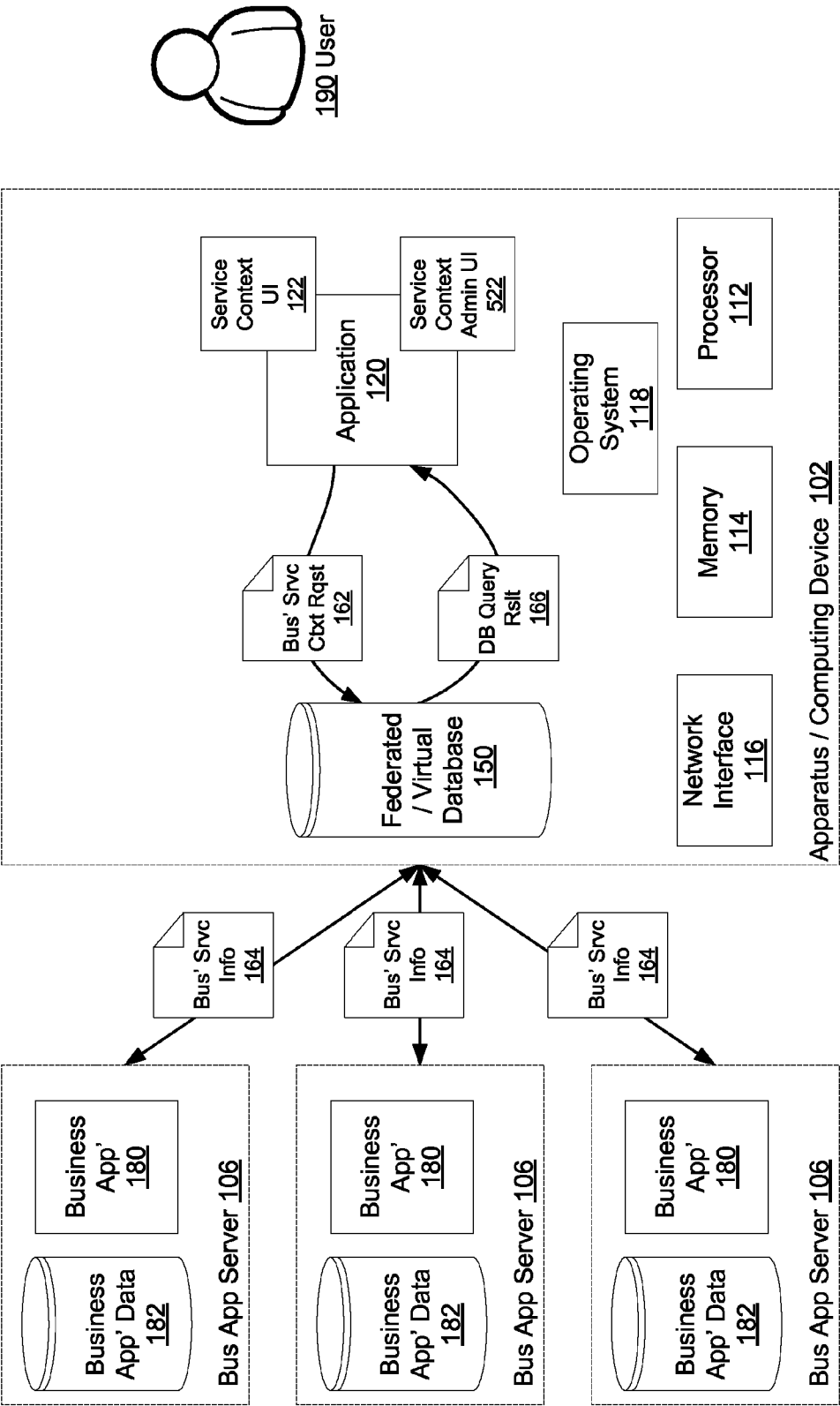


FIG. 5b 501

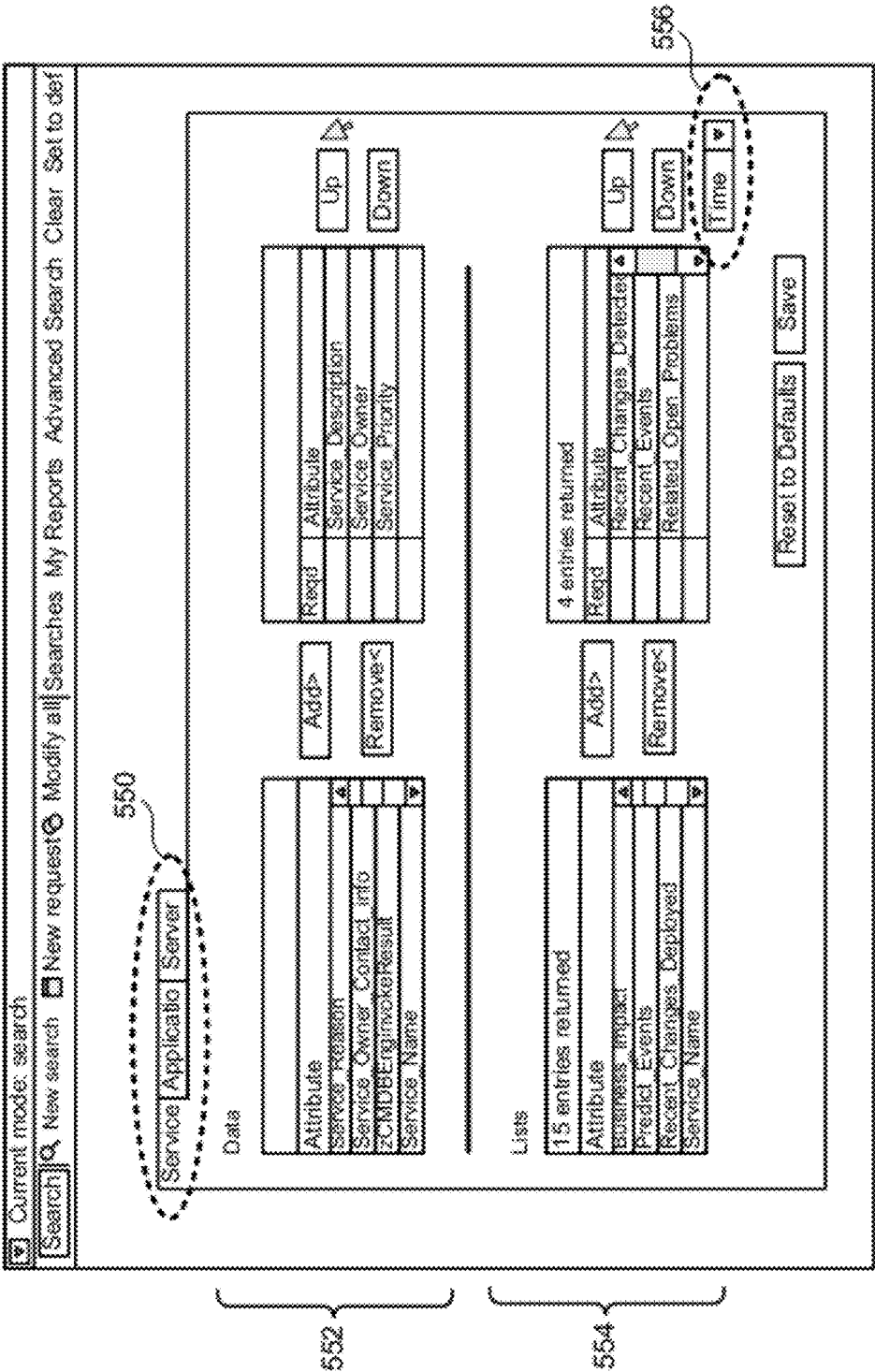


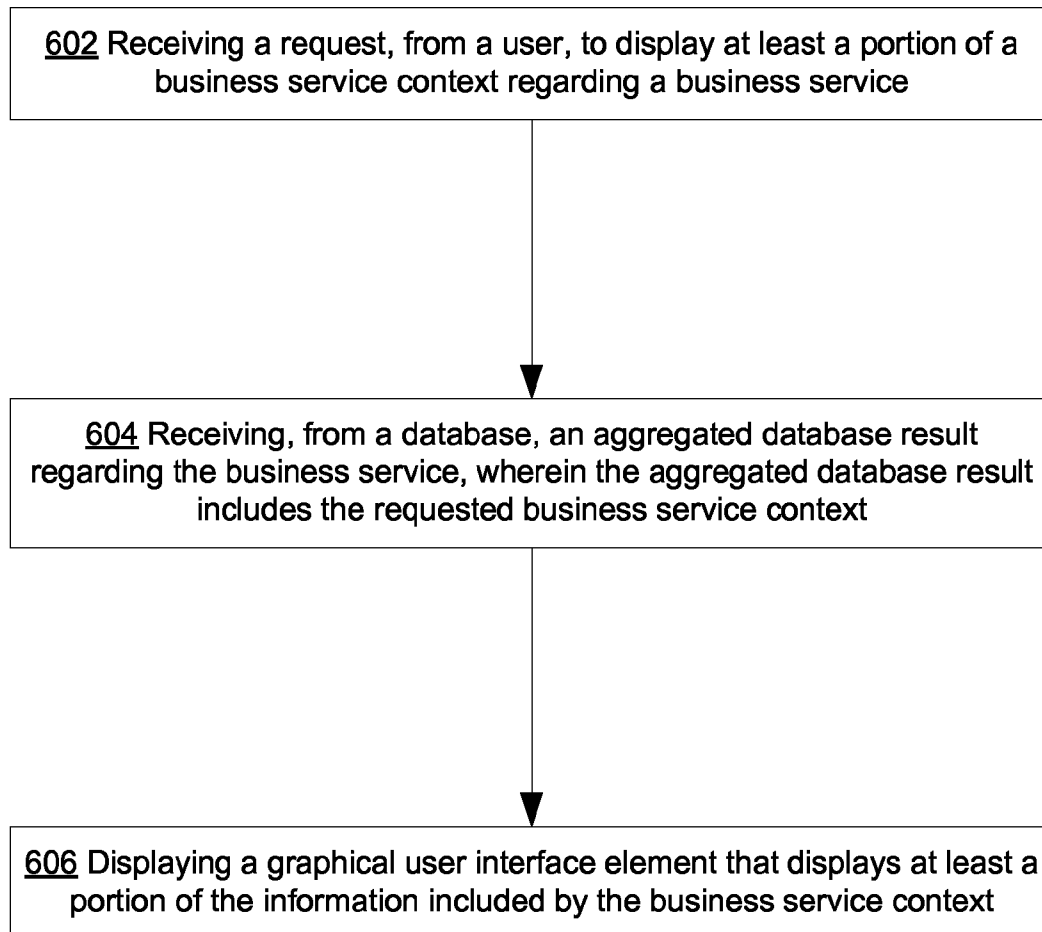
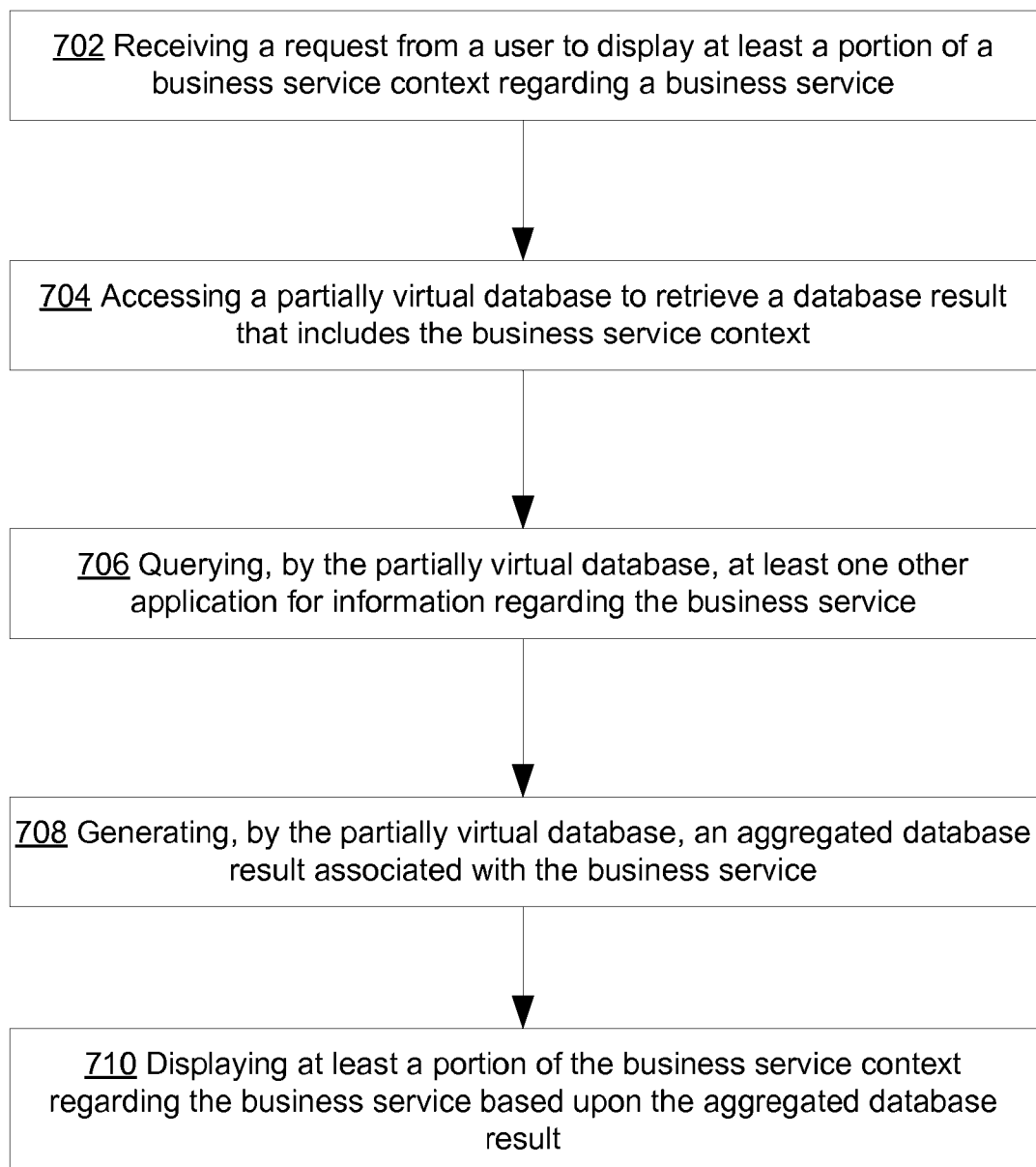
FIG. 6600

FIG. 7700

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SERVICE CONTEXT

TECHNICAL FIELD

This description relates to business computing, specifically the collection and display of information related to a business service.

BACKGROUND

Business service management (BSM) is generally a methodology for monitoring and measuring information technology (IT) services from a business perspective. Often, BSM includes a set of management software tools, processes and methods to manage the IT of a business or businesses. BSM tools are generally designed to help IT organizations view and manage technology environments, in order to better support and maintain the main services they provide to the business.

Generally, businesses execute or run a number of applications or systems (e.g., computers, etc.). Often these applications may collect or have access to different types of data. For example, an email system may include an email server application which is executed by one or more physical computers or servers. In such an example, a Help-Desk application may collect or access data referring to various user's experiences and troubles with an email system. Conversely, the email server application itself may collect or access data regarding how the email system processes emails (e.g., user not found errors, failure to deliver errors, number of emails sent, etc.). A third business application may monitor the system resources (e.g., processor load, memory utilization, network bandwidth, etc.) used by the physical computer or computes executing the email server application.

Traditionally, these pieces of information may be dispersed across various IT or business applications. As such, a traditional BSM set of management tools may not be able to provide a user or BSM software with a full view of the status or health of the email system. Generally, an application, even a BSM application, may only access data that is accessible by that application. Therefore, the Help-Desk application, in a traditional environment, would not be able to access the data collected by the email server application (e.g., user not found errors, etc.) or the system resource monitoring application (e.g., network load, etc.). As a result, a user of the Help-Desk application would have a limited view or understanding of the state or status of the email system. Such issues may occur for other IT applications.

SUMMARY

According to one general aspect, a method of using an application may include receiving a request, from a user, to display at least a portion of a business service context regarding a business service. The method may also include receiving, from a database, an aggregated database result regarding the business service. The aggregated database result may include the requested business service context. The business service context may include information from a plurality of other applications. The method may further include displaying a graphical user interface element that displays at least a portion of the information included by the business service context.

According to another general aspect, a method of providing a business service context within a first application may include receiving a request from a user to display at least a portion of a business service context regarding a business service. The method may include accessing a partially virtual

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database to retrieve a database result that includes the business service context. The method may include querying, by the partially virtual database, at least one other application for information regarding the business service. The method may include generating, by the partially virtual database, an aggregated database result associated with the business service. The aggregated database result may include information provided by the at least one other application. The method may include displaying at least a portion of the business service context regarding the business service based upon the aggregated database result.

According to another general aspect, a computer program product for displaying a view of what a given business service is and how it is performing may be tangibly embodied on a computer-readable medium and including executable code. The executable code, when executed, may cause a first apparatus to receive a request, from a user, to display at least a portion of a business service context regarding a business service. The executable code may cause the apparatus to receive, from a database, an aggregated database result regarding the business service. The aggregated database result may include the requested business service context. The business service context may include information from a plurality of other applications. The executable code may cause the apparatus to display a graphical user interface element that displays at least a portion of the information included by the business service context.

The details of one or more implementations are set forth in the accompanying drawings and the description below. Other features will be apparent from the description and drawings, and from the claims.

A system and/or method for collecting and displaying information, substantially as shown in and/or described in connection with at least one of the figures, as set forth more completely in the claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a block diagram of an example embodiment of a system in accordance with the disclosed subject matter.

FIG. 2 is a diagram of an example embodiment of a user interface in accordance with the disclosed subject matter.

FIG. 3 is a block diagram of an example embodiment of a system in accordance with the disclosed subject matter.

FIG. 4a is a diagram of an example embodiment of a user interface in accordance with the disclosed subject matter.

FIG. 4b is a diagram of an example embodiment of a user interface in accordance with the disclosed subject matter.

FIG. 4c is a diagram of an example embodiment of a user interface in accordance with the disclosed subject matter.

FIG. 5a is a block diagram of an example embodiment of a system in accordance with the disclosed subject matter.

FIG. 5b is a block diagram of an example embodiment of a user interface in accordance with the disclosed subject matter.

FIG. 6 is a flow chart of an example embodiment of a technique in accordance with the disclosed subject matter.

FIG. 7 is a flow chart of an example embodiment of a technique in accordance with the disclosed subject matter.

Like reference symbols in the various drawings indicate like elements.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

FIG. 1 is a block diagram of an example embodiment of a system **100** in accordance with the disclosed subject matter. In one embodiment, the system **100** may include an apparatus **102** that is used or operated by a user **190**, a database (DB)

server or system **104**, and one or more business application servers **106**. In various embodiments, the apparatus **102** may include a traditional computer (e.g., a desktop, laptop, net-book, etc.) or a non-traditional computing device (e.g., smart-phone, tablet, thin client, computer terminal, etc.). It is understood that, while three business application servers **106** are illustrated, the disclosed subject matter is not limited to any number of such devices. Further, it is understood that the devices **102**, **104**, and **106** may include instantiations of such devices included in a virtual or modular environment (e.g., a blade server system, virtual machines, etc.).

In this context, the term “business service” refers to a software application or a computing device operated within an Information Technology (IT) environment. In one embodiment, the a business service may include software applications, such as, for example, an email server, a file server, a Help-Desk application, a customer relationship management (CRM) application, an automation application, etc. In another embodiment, a business service may include computing devices, such as for example, a business application server **106**, a blade server executing a plurality of business applications, a server pool executing one or more instances of a business application (e.g., a web server, etc.), computing devices issued to employees or users **190**, etc. It is understood that the above are merely a few illustrative examples to which the disclosed subject matter is not limited.

In this context, the term “business application” refers to a business service that is a software application or, more colloquially, an application (e.g., a Help-Desk application, a sales automation application, etc.). In this context, the term “business server” or “business application server” refers to a computing device that executes a business application (e.g., a server pool, a blade server, etc.).

In the illustrated embodiment, a user **190** may operate, use or control an apparatus or computing device **102**. In various embodiments, the computing device **102** may include a processor **112** configured to execute a stream or machine executable instructions (e.g., operating system **118**, application **120**, etc.).

The computing device **102** may include a memory **114** configured to store data and/or instructions. In various embodiments, the memory **114** may include volatile memory, non-volatile memory, or a combination thereof. The memory **114** or portions thereof may be configured to store data in a temporary fashion (e.g., Random Access Memory (RAM), etc.) as part of the execution of instructions by the processor **112**. The memory **114** or portions thereof may be configured to store data in a semi-permanent or long-term fashion (e.g., a hard drive, solid-state memory, flash memory, optical storage, etc.).

In various embodiments, the computing device **102** may include one or more network interfaces **116** configured to communicate with other devices (e.g., server **104**, etc.) via a communications network. In various embodiments, this communications network may employ wired (e.g., Ethernet, Fibre Channel, etc.) or wireless (e.g., Wi-Fi, cellular, etc.) protocols or standards or a combination thereof.

In one embodiment, the computing device **102** may include an operating system (OS) **118** that may be executed by the processor **112**. In such an embodiment, the OS **118** may be configured to act as an intermediary between application programs (e.g., application **120**, etc.) and the computer hardware (processor **112**, network interface **116**, etc.). However, the application may be executed directly by the hardware and may frequently call the OS **118** or be interrupted by it.

In various embodiments, the computing device **102** may include or execute an application **120**. In various embodi-

ments, the application **120** may include a BMC software application and may be executed by the processor **112** in conjunction with the OS **118**. In one embodiment, the computing device **102** may also include other applications (not shown).

In one embodiment, the user **190** may desire to view or access information regarding a particular business service (e.g., one of the business application server **106**, one of the business applications **180**, etc.). In such an embodiment, the user **190** may request the display of a business service context user interface element **122**. In this context, the terms “business service context” and “service context” are synonymous.

FIG. **2** is a diagram of an example embodiment of a user interface (UI) **200** in accordance with the disclosed subject matter. In the illustrated embodiment, the UI **200** may be the main or a portion of the UI for an application executing on a computing device (e.g., application **120** of FIG. **1**). In the illustrated embodiment, the application may be an IT Service Management (ITSM) application. However, in various embodiments, the service context may be launched or displayed within any tool or application (e.g., ITSM, BMC ProactiveNet Performance Management (BPPM), etc.). It is understood that the above are merely a few illustrative examples to which the disclosed subject matter is not limited.

In this example embodiment, the user may desire to see or access information regarding a particular business service. In the illustrated embodiment, the user has selected to display a service context for business service **202**.

In one embodiment, the user may right-click on the UI element **202** associated with the desired business service (e.g., an Electronic Product Distribution (EPD) business service, etc.). This may bring up a context menu, from which the user may select to display a service context associated with the selected business service. In another embodiment, an icon or button may bring up the service context. In yet another embodiment, other UI means or forms of interaction (e.g., gestures, hyperlinks, etc.) may be employed to indicate a user's request to display the service context of the selected business service. It is understood that the above are merely a few illustrative examples to which the disclosed subject matter is not limited.

In various embodiments, once the service context has been obtained, as described in more detail below, the application may display the service context UI element **204** to display the service context or a portion thereof.

In various embodiments, the business service context may include a means by which applications can reach into data they do not normally provide themselves or have access to in order to give users a thumbnail sketch or condensed version or view of what a given business service is and how it is performing. In some embodiments, the business service context and the UI element **204** displaying the business service context may be likened to a packing label (as used on shipping packages, e.g., FedEx, etc.) for business services. However, it is understood that the disclosed subject matter is not limited to this analogy, and that the analogy is merely for illustrative purposes.

In various embodiments, the application may be able to make available a visual UI component **204** that a user may bring up or request in the context of some application they are running (e.g., IT Service Management, etc.) for a given business service (e.g., business service **202**, EPD, etc.) that is viewable in the UI **200** of the launching application.

In some embodiments, this UI element **204** may be referred to as the Service Context Summary View and is discussed in more detail below in regards to FIG. **4a**. In such an embodiment, further UI elements may also be displayed or, in one

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embodiment, replace the UI element **204**. These subsequent UI elements may be referred to as sub-views and may include, in various embodiments, a list view configured to display additional information regarding the service in a less condensed or alternate format. In various embodiments, various UI elements or views may focus on various aspects of the selected business service. It is understood that the above are merely a few illustrative examples to which the disclosed subject matter is not limited.

In another embodiment, data from Service Context may be integrated in the User Interface **200** of the application the consumes or makes use of the Service Context (as opposed to being displayed in a separate UI element, e.g., UI element **204**, etc.). In such an embodiment, the set of data available to such applications may be enriched and may, in one embodiment, make the user experience more productive. In such an embodiment, the integration of Service Context Data into the UI **200** of the launching application may be referred to as the Native View of Service Context. In such an embodiment, various applications may access and use data from the Service Context without ever needing to display the visual UI element **204**. It is understood that the above are merely a few illustrative examples to which the disclosed subject matter is not limited.

A user may desire the display of a business service context for a variety of reasons. Below, a few example usages cases of the service context are described. It is understood that the below are merely a few illustrative examples to which the disclosed subject matter is not limited.

In a first example, in applications that include ticketing systems, help desks or service desks one of the most inefficient processes is getting an incident or support ticket assigned to the correct personnel. Once an incident is entered into the system, it may be handed off several times before the correct assignment is made. A service context and the display of the service context (at least in part) may aid in the identification of the correct assignee of an incident by providing richer, more relevant data that is related to a given business service. In a very short period of time someone looking at a Service (via the business service context UI element) can tell what incidents are associated with it. Subsequent drill downs or other UI elements or views may show if such a business service has, for example, some infrastructure component that has failed. Armed with such information a help desk employee may quickly assign to the incident to the appropriate system administrator.

In a second example, the flow of information across management disciplines is often not as fluid as it often should be. Problems that are encountered in one discipline may simply stay with the personnel associated with that business group or silo or if the problem does get communicated outward, the communication is often done in a less than optimal fashion. With a service context the information collected within a given silo or business group is the same as that in other disciplines, silos, or business groups. The service context may be discipline agnostic. As such the data values and their respective visual representations in the summary view or other UI element may be shared across disciplines or business groups with little risk that they will be misunderstood or misinterpreted.

In a third example, with a service context, a user may be given enough information regarding what could be wrong with a given business service. However, if the user needs or desires better, more detailed information they can obtain it by launching another business application. In such an embodiment, the service context and the UI element displaying it may provide the user with a starting point to help them get

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started on solving a problem regarding the business service without the user having to start or execute each of the various (and often more intensive) business applications.

In various embodiments, the service context and/or the UI element **204** that displays the service context may be consistent in one or more ways. For example, the look and feel of the UI element **204** may be consistent across applications. A user may display the service context in help-desk application or in an IT service management application and the UI element **204** may be substantially identical. In various embodiments, this may be beneficial as users in various business groups or of various business applications may be conditioned to know what to expect from the business context and how to process the information contained within.

In some embodiments, the service context may be consistent in terms of the data, information, or attributes displayed. For example, regardless of the application displaying or launching the service context UI element the UI element may include the same fields (e.g., business service description, business service owner, business service state, etc.) and the same values for those fields. Again, such consistency may aid user efficiency.

In yet another embodiment, the service context and/or the UI element **204** that displays the service context may be configured to display the information regarding the business service in a simple and speedy manner. Returning to the analogy of the service context as a packing label, the service context may include or display only information that is deemed (e.g., by a system administrator, etc.) critical and no more (unless a subsequent view or UI element is displayed), such that the information contained therein is easily understandable by a user.

Returning to FIG. 1, while the process of creating and displaying the service context is shown for a single application (e.g., application **120**, etc.), it is understood that the service context of a given business service may be displayed within a number of supporting applications. For example, a second user and a second computing device executing a second application (not shown) may also request a service context for the same business service as the user **190**. In such an embodiment, the second user and the user **190** may see an identical or substantially equivalent service context or the UI element **122** displaying the service context. In such an embodiment, a user at a help-desk application and a user at a device provisioning application may see substantially the same service context with a consistent look and feel, and data values (e.g., business service status, etc.) regardless of their host application (e.g., application **120**, etc.).

In the illustrated embodiment, the user **190** may request to display the service context **168** of a given business service **188**. In various embodiments, the business service **188** may include one of the business servers **106**, one of the business applications **180**, or another business service. It is understood that the above are merely a few illustrative examples to which the disclosed subject matter is not limited.

In such an embodiment, the application **120** may transmit or send a business service context request **162** to a federated database **150**. In various embodiments, the business service context request **162** may include an attribute or field indicating which business service the service context request pertains. In a preferred embodiment, the federated DB **150** may include a configuration management DB (CMDB). However, in a less preferred embodiment, general storage components (e.g., a relational database, etc.) may be included in the federated DB **150**. It is understood that the above is merely one illustrative example to which the disclosed subject matter is not limited.

In the illustrated embodiment, the federated DB **150** may be executed or included by the DB server **104**. In various embodiments, the DB server **104** may include a processor **152**, a memory **154**, and at least one network interface **156**, as described above. As described above, in various embodiments, the memory **154** may include volatile storage (e.g., random access memory etc.), non-volatile storage (e.g., a hard drive, a solid-state drive, etc.), or a combination thereof. In such an embodiment, the federated DB **150** may be stored, at least in part, by a portion of the memory **154**.

In various embodiments, the federated DB **150** may include a virtual or at least partially virtual DB. In such an embodiment, the federated DB **150** may not include the service context **168** or the information included in the service context **168**. However, the federated DB **150** may provide a single point of query for the service context information or virtualize a database that appears (to the application **120**) to include the information included in the service context **168**.

In such an embodiment, the federated DB **150** may retrieve information from a plurality of other business applications **180**. In various embodiments, once the federated DB **150** has received a request for the information regarding the business service **188**, the federated DB **150** may then in turn query one or more business applications **180** regarding the business service **188**.

In various embodiments, the queried business applications **180** may retrieve information (if such exists) regarding the business service **188** from their respective business application data repositories **182**. This information **164** may then be transmitted to the federated DB **150**.

In such an embodiment, the federated DB **150** may then generate an aggregated database result **166** based, at least in part, upon the various pieces of information **164** regarding the business service **188** retrieved from the plurality of business applications **180**. In one embodiment, the federated DB **150** may aggregate the information **164** in such a way that the aggregated DB result **166** appears as if the federated DB **150** was not virtual but actually included the desired information in a physical storage location. Further, in such an embodiment, the aggregated database result **166** may provide the application **120** with the information for the service context **168** or the service context **168** itself in a single database transaction. In such an embodiment, the application **120** may not have to ask repeatedly for data or be constantly updated as new information **164** arrives from the various business applications **180**.

In one embodiment, the application **120** may receive the aggregated database query result **166**. As described above, in various embodiments, this aggregated database query result **166** may include the service context **168**. In various embodiments, the application **120** may filter or condense the information included by the service context **168** into a predetermined format (e.g., a series of predefined fields to be displayed, etc.). This portion of the service context **168** may then be displayed to the user **190** via the service context UI element **122**.

In such an embodiment, if the user **190** wishes to “drill down” or display other portions of the service context **168**, new UI elements or views may be generated and displayed based upon predefined rules detailing the contents of such UI elements. Various embodiments of such views are described in reference to FIGS. **4a**, **4b**, and **4c**, below. It is understood that the above are merely a few illustrative examples to which the disclosed subject matter is not limited.

FIG. **3** is a block diagram of an example embodiment of a system **300** in accordance with the disclosed subject matter. In various embodiments, the system **300** may be a more

detailed embodiment of portions of the system **100** of FIG. **1**. In the illustrated embodiment, the system **300** may include a service context consumer **302** that may be an application as described in reference to FIG. **1**. The system **300** may also include, in one embodiment, a federated or at least partially virtual database (DB) **304**. The system **300** may also include one or more provider applications **306** that each provide information or data regarding a particular business service which is the focus of the current business service context.

In various embodiments, the service context consumer or consumer application **302** may request **312** a service context for a given business service. This request **312** may be made to the federated database **304**. The service context consumer **302** may expect to receive, in return, an aggregated database query result **314**, which may include the requested service context. In such an embodiment, the service context consumer **302** may request **312** and receive **314** the service context (or information from which the service context may be derived) in a single atomic database transaction, as described above.

In the illustrated embodiment, the federated or partially virtual database **304** may include a federated DB **304** may include a federated DB interface **358** that is configured to receive database requests (e.g., request **312**, etc.) and provide database query results (e.g., query result **314**, etc.) as if the DB **304** was a non-virtualized database. In various embodiments, the federated DB interface **358** may be referred to as a Service Context Abstraction Layer (SCAL) that presents a virtual view of all the attributes gathered from the various Application Data APIs **394** by this architecture. By presenting the attributes in this way a consumer application **302** (e.g., the Service Context View or Native Views) may get all the attributes needed or the service context in one retrieval operation. In addition, the federated DB interface **358** may be alternatively exposed as a Web Service for those consumer applications **302** that prefer this protocol.

The federated DB **304** may include Federated DB storage portion **350**, configured to “store” various database entries or information regarding one or more business services. As described above, in various embodiments, this storage may occur virtually, at least in part, in that the federated DB **304** not actually store, at least in a long term sense, the information included in the storage portion **350**, but may instead access the data dynamically from the one or more provider applications **306**.

However, in some embodiments, the federated DB **304** may include one or more non-virtual fields or database entries and their respective values **352**. These non-virtual fields **352** may include fundamental or default values for the various business services referenced by the federated DB **304**. Such fields may include: the business service’s name, the business service’s description, the owner of the business service, etc. It is understood that the above are merely a few illustrative examples to which the disclosed subject matter is not limited.

In addition, the federated DB **304** may include one or more virtual fields or database entries and their respective values **354**. These virtual fields **354** may include any database fields and values that are retrieved from a provider application **306** and only nominally stored in the federated DB **304**. Example virtual fields may include: business service status, number of incidents or other performance metrics associated with the business service, business service location, etc. It is understood that the above are merely a few illustrative examples to which the disclosed subject matter is not limited.

In such an embodiment, the federated DB **304** may be referred to as merely partially virtual as the federated DB **350** may include both non-virtual fields **352** and virtual fields **354**.

that are aggregated to provide the illusion that the federated DB 304 includes a larger more informative DB than actually exists. The non-virtual fields 352 and virtual fields 354 may be aggregated to provide the illusion that the federated DB 304 is a single monolithic database. However, in another embodiment, the federated DB 304 may be fully virtual and may not include the non-virtualized fields 352. In yet another embodiment, the federated DB 304 may be non-virtual and the information illustrated as being stored in the virtual fields 354 may be actually stored in non-virtual fields 352 of a non-virtualized federated DB. It is understood that the above are merely a few illustrative examples to which the disclosed subject matter is not limited.

In various embodiments, the federated DB 304 may include a cache 360 to temporarily store the virtual fields 354 retrieved from the provider applications 306. By temporarily storing results of retrievals from the provider applications 306, the system 300 may avoid having to re-retrieve such data each time it is requested by the consumer application 302.

In one embodiment, the federated DB 304 may include a service context adapter 356. In such an embodiment, the service context adapter 356 may be configured to access data that is delivered from the provider applications 306. As described below, this information may be provided by the provider application 306 via a standardized format regardless of the specific provider application 306 accessed. For example, a help-desk provider application and a system resources provider application may produce information in the same format or according to a predefined protocol. In various embodiments, the service context adapter 356 may be configured to adapt or convert this information received in a standardized format into the database fields 354 or even fields 352 employed by the federated DB 304.

In one embodiment, the provider applications 306 may be accessed as web services and may provide their respective data in a predefined format (e.g., Simple Object Access Protocol (SOAP), Extensible Markup Language (XML), etc.). In various embodiments, this format may be described or defined via a Web Services Description Language (WSDL) or other manner. It is understood that the above are merely a few illustrative examples to which the disclosed subject matter is not limited.

In various embodiments, the federated DB 304 may know or be aware of which provider applications 306 may exist and how to access them by relying on or making use of an application or web service registry 308. In such an embodiment, each provider application 306 may register with or inform the registry 308 of the provider application 306's existence, the location or means by which a consumer (e.g., the federated DB 304) may access the provider application 306 (e.g., network address, port number, protocol, etc.), the services or information the provider application 306 may provide and, in various embodiments, other relevant details regarding the provider service 306. In various embodiments, the registry 308 may include a Universal Description, Discovery and Integration (UDDI) compliant or substantially compliant registry. It is understood that the above is merely one illustrative example to which the disclosed subject matter is not limited.

In one embodiment, the system 300 may include one or more provider applications 306. Each of these provider applications 306 may include various pieces of data or information 392 that are stored in whatever format or manner the application 306 makes use of. This data 392 may be accessed via the provider application 306's normal data application programmatic interface (API) 394.

However, as described above, the federated DB 304 may expect or require that information provided to the federated

DB 304 by the provider applications 306 be provided in a standardized predefined and uniform format, and not the various formats or via the various access schemes used by the various provider applications 306. As such, in various embodiments, each provider application 306 may include, implement, or make use of a standard attribute interface (SAI) 396. Each implementation of the SAI 396 may be configured to allow a consumer (e.g., the federated DB 304) external to the provider application 306 to access the application data 392 in a standardized, uniform and predefined format and protocol. In the illustrated embodiment, the SAI 396 may allow the provider application 306 to function as a web service and be accessed by the federated DB 304 via a database query 316.

In various embodiments, the federated DB 304 may be configured to read or access information a given business service from the provider applications 306 but may not be configured to edit or write new information back to the provider applications 306. In such an embodiment, the service context may be an informative tool not an ameliorative or control tool. In another less preferred embodiment, however, the service context consumer 302 may be configured to specify edits or alterations in the retrieved data. In response, the federated DB 304 may be configured to write such change in the information back to the respective provider applications 306. In such an embodiment, the writing between the consumer application 302 and the federated DB 304 may occur as a single database transaction, similarly to the read transaction (e.g., request 312 and response 314). In yet another embodiment, the consumer application 302 may be configured write data or communicate commands directly to the provider applications 306. It is understood that the above are merely a few illustrative examples to which the disclosed subject matter is not limited.

In various embodiments, the issue of security may be considered in retrieving the service context. In one embodiment, the user or the consumer application 302 may be associated with one or more security credentials that dictate what data may be accessed and/or displayed. In such an embodiment, the federated DB 304 may be configured to filter the data received from the provider applications 306, and eventually provided to the consumer application 302 via the aggregated database query result 314 based upon the security credentials associated with the consumer application 302. In one embodiment, the security credentials may be provided via the request for service context 312. In such an embodiment, the presentation of the security credentials may be implicit (e.g., derivable via a username, etc.) or explicit (e.g., an authentication certificate or password included in the request 312, etc.).

In another embodiment, the user of consumer application 302 may be provided with an authentication or security check (e.g., login prompt, key code request, etc.) to access data securely stored on a provider application 306. In such an embodiment, the authentication requests and responses may be forwarded between the consumer application 302 and the provider application 306 via the federated DB 304. In another embodiment, the consumer application 302 and the provider application 306 may communicate directly or via another intermediary (e.g., an authentication server (not shown), etc.).

In one embodiment, the service context may be initially displayed without the un-authorized data and the user may then be able to actively request that the un-authorized data be displayed. In such an embodiment, this may cause the authentication UI (e.g., login screen, etc.), as described above, for the authorization of the requested data. In one embodiment, this may allow the service context to be displayed (at least partly) in a quick and unobtrusive manner, but may allow the

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display of the full or most complete service context if a user wishes or desires that initially un-authorized information. In various embodiments, the new authorization may cause a new request for the updated service context or may simply cause the consumer application 302 or the federated DB 304 to

unlock or cease to filter out the previously unauthorized data. It is understood that the above are merely a few illustrative examples to which the disclosed subject matter is not limited. Various schemes for filtering or removing unauthorized information in a business service context may be employed. Further various schemes for un-filtering or subsequently authorizing information in a business service context may be employed. In addition it is understood that the system 300 may support having different security models for the provider applications 306 such that the system 300 is security model heterogeneous.

In various embodiments, one or more of the provider applications 306 may include a multi-tenancy architecture. In this context, "multi-tenancy" refers to a principle in software architecture where a single instance of the software (e.g., application 306) runs or executes on a server, serving multiple client organizations (tenants). Multi-tenancy may be contrasted with a multi-instance architecture where separate software instances (or hardware systems) are set up for different client organizations. With a multi-tenant architecture, a software application is designed to virtually partition its data and configuration, and each client organization works with a customized virtual application instance.

In such an embodiment, the information provided by or available to a multi-tenancy provider application 306 may include data for a number of tenants. In such an embodiment, the provider application 306 or the federated DB 304 may be configured to filter the provided data by tenant, such that the consumer application 302 only receives information it the service context that is associated with the same tenant as the consumer application 302.

For example, the tenants of a provider application 306 may include Exxon, Sunoco, Shell, Chevron. The consumer application 302 may be associated with the Shell tenant. Therefore, in such an embodiment, the service context may be filtered to only include data about the business service that would be accessible or authorized for the Shell tenant. It is understood that the above is merely one illustrative example to which the disclosed subject matter is not limited.

In another embodiment, the service context may include both tenant-common data and tenant-specific data. For example, tenant-common data may include data that is the same regardless of what tenant is associated with the consumer application 302 or which tenant accesses the data. Such tenant-common data may include, for example: the system resource load of business service, the computing device name, business service uptime, etc. Conversely, the tenant-specific data may include data that differs for each tenant. Such tenants-specific data may include, for example: the number of failed email transmission attempt an email business service may experience, the number of failed login attempts to a business service, the number of help-desk requests, support tickets, or incidents for a business service, etc.

In such an embodiment, the system 300 may not filter the results of the service context request such that the tenant-common data is included in the service context. But, the system 300 may also filter tenant-specific data such that only tenant-specific data associated with the consumer application 302's tenant are included in the service context. For example, every tenant may be able to see or view, within their respective service contexts, the common-tenant data (e.g., business ser-

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vice status, etc.), but each tenant may only see or view their own tenant-specific data (e.g., a Mobile tenant may only view the number of business service incidents for the Shell tenant, likewise for other tenants, etc.).

In various embodiments, more than two levels or kinds of tenant data (e.g., tenant-common and tenant-specific) may be employed. In another embodiment, data may be associated with or have multiple or overlapping tenants. In such an embodiment, tenant-common data may not exist per se, but tenant-common data may effectively exist as all tenants are associated or authorized to access that data. Likewise, an overlapping security scheme (e.g., non-tenant based or considering tenants) may exist. It is understood that the above are merely a few illustrative examples to which the disclosed subject matter is not limited.

FIG. 4a is a diagram of an example embodiment of a user interface (UI) or UI element 401 in accordance with the disclosed subject matter. In various embodiments, the UI 401 may be included as part of or the service context user interface element (e.g., the service context user interface element 122 of FIG. 1). In one embodiment, the UI 401 may be displayed within or as part of a pop-up window or portion of a larger UI (e.g., in a Native View, as described above).

In the illustrated embodiment, the UI 401 may include an Attribute View of a Service Context Summary View. In such an embodiment, the UI 401 may provide a user with a "thumbnail sketch" or condensed version or view of what a given business service is and how it is performing. As described above, the information displayed in the UI 401 may have been received in an aggregated database query result. This aggregated database query result may have been produced or generated by a federated or at least partially virtual database based upon information regarding the business service that was, in turn, provided by a plurality of producer applications.

In one embodiment, the UI 401 may include a UI element (e.g., a label, etc.) that displays the name 410 of the business service that the service context pertains. In various embodiments, the UI 401 may also include a status indicator 418 UI element (e.g., a icon, a particular color, etc.). In the illustrated embodiment, the business service "Sales Automation" may be in a critical or imperfect state. Therefore, the status indicator 418 is illustrated as an orange "X" icon giving a user a quick indicator that the business service is in a "warning" state. It is understood that the above is merely one illustrative example to which the disclosed subject matter is not limited.

In various embodiments, an administrator, privileged user, or software developer may determine which database fields or pieces of information regarding the business service are to be displayed in this "thumbnail sketch" or condensed version or view of what a given business service is and how it is performing. In another, less preferred embodiment, the user may define what attributes or information they would like to see displayed. In such an embodiment, the UI 401 may display one or more predefined attributes or fields.

In one embodiment, these predefined fields may fall into two or more categories. In an example embodiment, three categories will be used. However, it is understood that various categories or partitions of business service fields or attributes may be employed and that the disclosed subject matter is not limited to any one example embodiment.

The first category are mandatory or fixed fields which may have been determined or defined by a software developer to be displayed in all service contexts and service context UI elements. (e.g., UI 401, etc.). Examples of such mandatory or fixed fields or attributes may include: the business service's status, any other business services or configuration items that

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are related to the service context's business service, etc. It is understood that the above are merely a few illustrative examples to which the disclosed subject matter is not limited.

The second category of fields or attributes may include default fields which are predefined by a software developer as included within the service context, but may be removed by an administrator, privileged user, or another user as deemed by the embodiment. In one embodiment, examples of such default fields or attributes may include, but are not limited to: the owner or user primarily associated with the business service, a description of the business service, an indicator of the level of business impact of the business service, a number of events or activities performed or experienced by the business service (e.g., completed change request, changes deployed, incidents, etc.), etc. In various embodiments, the various fields which include numbers (e.g., a number of events, etc.) may also include a listing or a pointer to those enumerated items. It is understood that the above are merely a few illustrative examples to which the disclosed subject matter is not limited.

The third category of fields or attributes may include optional fields that are by default omitted from a service context but may be added by an administrator, privileged user, or another user as deemed by the embodiment. In one embodiment, examples of such optional fields may include, but are not limited to: the number of maintenance hours experienced by the business service, the owner of the business service's contact information, the location of the business service, the priority level of the business service, the compliance status (e.g., to a standard or contractual compliment, such as uptime, etc.) of the business service, a number of outage records associated with the business service, a number of work orders or service tickets associated with the business service, a number of changes detecting the relation to the business service, a number of predictive events associated with the business service, etc. In various embodiments, the various fields which include numbers (e.g., a number of predictive events, etc.) may also include a listing or a pointer to those enumerated items. It is understood that the above are merely a few illustrative examples to which the disclosed subject matter is not limited.

In the illustrated embodiment, a number of attributes or fields of the service context may be displayed by UI element groups **412** and **414**. As described above, some of these attributes or fields may be displayed or included as mandatory. Other attributes or fields may be included or displayed based upon a predefined scheme or set of rules established by an administrator or privileged user.

In the illustrated embodiment, UI element group **412** illustrates a set of attributes that are relatively static or do not allow for further interaction with a user. Examples of such fields or attributes may include, but are not limited to: a description of the business service, the owner of the business service, the status of the business service, and the impact priority of the business service. It is understood that the above are merely a few illustrative examples to which the disclosed subject matter is not limited.

In the illustrated embodiment, the UI element group **414** illustrates a set of attributes that are relatively dynamic and/or allow for further interaction with a user. In various embodiments, these attributes may include a number or a list of events or objects (e.g., service tickets, other business services, etc.) that may be condensed into a single numerical value. In another embodiment, the attributes of **414** may include list attributes, having several tuples (or rows) of values that are associated with each attribute. In such an embodiment, the

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user may be allowed or the UI may provide a means for to progressively disclosing such lists (e.g., via UI element **416**, UI **402** of FIG. **4b**, etc.).

Further, in various embodiments, these attributes may be governed or filtered based upon a set of rules that have been predefined by an administrator or privileged user. For example, one attribute shows that 25 incidents have occurred in the last hour. In such an embodiment, the set of rules may dictate the time frame (e.g., 1 hour, etc.) that will be considered with non-conforming or older incidents being filtered out.

In the illustrated embodiment, the numerical value of indicates within 1 hour is highlighted (e.g., in red, etc.) to indicate to a user that the value is of some importance. For example, the set of rules may dictate a threshold value or series of threshold values for the attribute or field. If the value of the field or items in the field (for fields containing a list of items), an indicator may be displayed to a user. In the illustrated embodiment, the UI element **416** may be colored (e.g., red, etc.). It is understood that the above is merely one illustrative example to which the disclosed subject matter is not limited.

As described above, various attributes or fields may be associated with additional data regarding the business service which is not immediately displayed in the Service Context Summary View UI **401**. In such an embodiment, the UI **401** may include a UI element (e.g., UI element **416**, etc.) that allows a user to display or view these additional, initially hidden data. In various embodiments, these UI elements **412** may include buttons, hyperlinks, context menus, etc. It is understood that the above are merely a few illustrative examples to which the disclosed subject matter is not limited.

FIG. **4b** is a diagram of an example embodiment of a user interface **402** in accordance with the disclosed subject matter. In one embodiment, the UI **402** may illustrate a List View of a Service Context View. In one embodiment, the UI **402** may be displayed once a user has selected on of the expanding or list UI elements of the Attribute View of the Service Context (e.g., UI element **416** of FIG. **4a**, etc.).

In various embodiments, the UI element **420** may display a list of all the items associated with the parent attribute or field. In the illustrated embodiment, the attribute "Related incidents in the last 1 hour" may be the parent attribute or field, and the various incidents (e.g., incident **422** "INC000000042156") may be the associated items. In the illustrated embodiment, the associated items themselves may include various fields or attributes. As such, in one embodiment, the list of associated items may be displayed in a table format. It is understood that the above is merely one illustrative example to which the disclosed subject matter is not limited.

In one embodiment, the UI **402** may include a UI element **422** for returning to the previous Service Context view (e.g., UI **401** of FIG. **4a**, etc.). In various embodiments, the UI **402** may include a group of UI elements **419** configured to facilitate navigation between various Service Context views. In the illustrated embodiment, the UI element group **419** may include a button or icon for navigating back to the previous Service Context view, a button or icon for returning to a "Home" view (e.g., the Attribute View of FIG. **4a**, etc.). In one embodiment, the group of UI elements **419** may include a button or icon to refresh the service context. In such an embodiment, the process for acquiring a service context, as described above, may be repeated and the new version of the service context may be displayed directly into the current view (e.g., UI **402**). In various embodiments, the group of UI elements **419** may be displayed across a plurality or all views. It is understood that the above are merely a few illustrative examples to which the disclosed subject matter is not limited.

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FIG. 4c is a diagram of an example embodiment of a user interface **403** in accordance with the disclosed subject matter. In one embodiment, the UI **403** may include a Related Configuration Items View of the Service Context. In such an embodiment, a user may view a list of business services or, in the illustrated embodiment, configuration items (e.g., Business Services, Applications, or Computer Systems, etc.) related to or associated with the business service that is the subject of the service context.

In the illustrated embodiment, the UI element group **430** may display a list of related configuration items **432** or business services, much as the list of incidents was displayed by UI element group **420** of FIG. 4b. In various embodiments, items included within a dependent or subordinate list, such as the related configuration items, may be selectable by a user. In various embodiments, the selection may display additional information regarding the item. In the illustrated embodiment, the name of a related configuration item may include a link UI element **434** that the user may select. Upon the selection of the related configuration item or business service a new service context may be generated and displayed. However, this new service context may associated with the selected item (e.g., CLT133), as opposed to the business service of the parent service context (e.g., Sales Automation, etc.). It is understood that the above is merely one illustrative example to which the disclosed subject matter is not limited.

FIG. 5a is a block diagram of an example embodiment of a system **500** in accordance with the disclosed subject matter. In various embodiments, the system **500** may be similar in many ways to the system **100** of FIG. 1. System **500** illustrates two variations that may occur separately or together in various embodiments of the disclosed subject matter.

In one embodiment, the apparatus or computing device **102** may include the federated DB **150**. In some embodiments, the federated DB **150** may be included in one of the business server **106**.

In one embodiment, the application **120** may include a service context administration UI **522**. In such an embodiment, the administration UI **522** may facilitate the creation and definition of the fields and attributes that make up a service context, and any sets of rules that govern the way the fields or attributes are filtered or displayed. For example, the administration UI **522** may allow an administrator to select which optional or non-mandatory attributes or fields are included in a service context. In some embodiments, these service context definitions may apply regardless of the business service associated with the service context. In another embodiment, each business service or class or group of business services may be associated with their respective definitions of their service contexts.

As described above, in various embodiments, the administration UI **522** may allow an administrator to define or create a set of rules for filtering the attributes of the service context or dictating how the attribute is to be displayed to the user. For example, the administration UI **522** may allow an administrator to dictate that only incidents occurring within the last 1 hour may be included in the service context (as illustrated by FIG. 4a). Also, the administration UI **522** may allow an administrator to define threshold values or other conditional values that when met or exceeded cause the service context UI **122** to display a predefined indication to the user (e.g., the red UI element **416** of FIG. 4a). It is understood that the above is merely one illustrative example to which the disclosed subject matter is not limited.

FIG. 5b is a block diagram of an example embodiment of a user interface **501** in accordance with the disclosed subject matter. In the illustrated embodiment, the UI **501** includes a

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service context administration UI **522** that may be used by an administrator to define the attributes and fields included within a service context, and any sets or rules that filter the attributes or dictate how they are displayed to a user.

In one embodiment, the UI **501** may include a series of UI elements **550** that may allow an administrator to define various service context settings for various categories or groups of business services (e.g., web services, applications, or server, etc.). In various embodiments, the UI **501** may include UI element groups **552** and **554** that are configured to allow an administrator to set or define which of a group of possible business service attributes or fields to include in the service context. UI element group **552** may allow the definition or inclusion of the relatively simple or single valued attributes or fields. Whereas UI element group **554** may allow the definition or inclusion of the relatively complex, list, or multi-valued attributes or fields.

In various embodiments, the UI element **556** may allow an administrator to define various one or more sets of rules to filter which values are included in the service context (e.g., incidents occurring within the last hour, etc.), how the respective values are displayed to the user (e.g., highlighting values above a threshold, etc.), or other rules. It is understood that the above are merely a few illustrative examples to which the disclosed subject matter is not limited.

FIG. 6 is a flow chart of an example embodiment of a technique in accordance with the disclosed subject matter. In various embodiments, the technique **600** may be used or produced by the systems such as those of FIG. 1, 3, or 5a. Furthermore, portions of technique **600** may be used with or may produce user interfaces such as those of FIG. 2, 4a, 4b, 4c, or 5b. Although, it is understood that the above are merely a few illustrative examples to which the disclosed subject matter is not limited. It is understood that the disclosed subject matter is not limited to the ordering of or number of actions illustrated by technique **600**.

Block **602** illustrates that, in one embodiment, an application may receive a request, from a user, to display at least a portion of a business service context regarding a business service, as described above. In some embodiments, requesting may include selecting, from within the application, a user interface element associated with the business service, as described above. In various embodiments, one or more of the action(s) illustrated by this Block may be performed by the apparatuses or systems of FIG. 1, 3, or 5a, the application **120** of FIG. 1 or 5a, or the via the user interface **200** of FIG. 2, as described above.

Block **604** illustrates that, in one embodiment, an application may receive, from a database, an aggregated database result regarding the business service, as described above. In some embodiments, the aggregated database result may include the requested business service context, as described above. In such an embodiment, the business service context may, in turn, include information from a plurality of other applications, as described above. In various embodiments, receiving the aggregated database result may include receiving the aggregated database result as part of a single database query transaction, as described above. In such an embodiment, the aggregated database result may be provided by an at least partially virtual database that virtualizes database fields whose field values are provided by the plurality of other applications, as described above. In various embodiments, one or more of the action(s) illustrated by this Block may be performed by the apparatuses or systems of FIG. 1, 3, or 5a, the application **120** or database server **104** of FIG. 1 or 5a, as described above.

Block 606 illustrates that, in one embodiment, an application may display a graphical user interface element that displays at least a portion of the information included by the business service context, as described above. In some embodiments, display may include distilling the information included by the aggregated database result into an a condensed set of information regarding the performance of the business service; and displaying a summary view graphical user interface element that displays at least a portion of the condensed set of information regarding the performance of the business service, as described above.

In various embodiments, displaying may include displaying a first graphical user interface element that displays a first portion of information regarding the attributes of the business service, and in response to a user indicating they wish to view more information regarding at least one aspect of the business service, displaying a second graphical user interface element that displays a second portion of information regarding the attributes of the business service, as described above. In such an embodiment, the first graphical user interface element may include a window that displays a Summary View of the business service context, and the second graphical user interface element may include a window that displays a List View of items included in the second portion of the information, as described above.

In another embodiment, displaying may include displaying a set of required information regarding the business service, and displaying a set of optional information regarding the business service, wherein the set of optional information has been previously predefined by an administrative user, as described above. In yet another embodiment, displaying may include evaluating at least one of the displayed information to determine if a value of the information exceeds a predefined threshold, and if so, indicating to the user that the respective information has exceeded the threshold value, as described above.

In various embodiments, displaying may include displaying a business service linking user interface element that when selected causes a second business service context to be created and displayed, wherein the second business service context is associated with a second business service indicated by the business service linking user interface element, as described above. In some embodiments, a second user (e.g., an administrator, etc.) may define a set of rules to filter the information included by the business service context, as described above. In such an embodiment, displaying may include filtering the information to be displayed based upon the predefined set of rules, as described above.

In various embodiments, one or more of the action(s) illustrated by this Block may be performed by the apparatuses or systems of FIG. 1, 3, or 5a, the application 110 of FIG. 1 or 5a, or the via the user interfaces 401, 402, and 403 of FIGS. 4a, 4b, and 4c, as described above.

FIG. 7 is a flow chart of an example embodiment of a technique in accordance with the disclosed subject matter. In various embodiments, the technique 700 may be used or produced by the systems such as those of FIG. 1, 3, or 5a. Furthermore, portions of technique 700 may be used with or may produce user interfaces such as those of FIG. 2, 4a, 4b, 4c, or 5b. Although, it is understood that the above are merely a few illustrative examples to which the disclosed subject matter is not limited. It is understood that the disclosed subject matter is not limited to the ordering of or number of actions illustrated by technique 700.

Block 702 illustrates that, in one embodiment, an application may receive a request, from a user, to display at least a portion of a business service context regarding a business

service, as described above. In various embodiments, one or more of the action(s) illustrated by this Block may be performed by the apparatuses or systems of FIG. 1, 3, or 5a, the application 120 of FIG. 1 or 5a, or the via the user interface 200 of FIG. 2, as described above.

Block 704 illustrates that, in one embodiment, an application may access a partially virtual database to retrieve a database result that includes the business service context, as described above. In various embodiments, one or more of the action(s) illustrated by this Block may be performed by the apparatuses or systems of FIG. 1, 3, or 5a, the application 120 or federated database 150 of FIG. 1 or 5a, or the via the user interface 200 of FIG. 2, as described above.

Block 706 illustrates that, in one embodiment, the partially virtual database may query at least one other application for information regarding the business service, as described above. In some embodiments, querying may include accessing the at least one other application via a web services interface that produces formatted query results that are standardized to a single predetermined formatting scheme regardless of the other application queried, and adapting the information, included in the query result from the respective other application, to the partial virtual database fields of the partially virtual database, as described above. In another embodiment, querying may include retrieving a list of other applications to query from a provider application registry in which the other applications have previously registered, as described above.

In various embodiments, the partially virtual database may be configured to read information regarding the business service from at least one other application, but may not write information regarding the business service from the at least one other application, as described above. In some embodiments, the partially virtual database may include at least one non-virtual field associated with the business services that are stored within the partially virtual database, and at least one virtual field associated with the business service whose field value is provided by the at least one application as a result of querying the at least one application, as described above.

In various embodiments, one or more of the action(s) illustrated by this Block may be performed by the apparatuses or systems of FIG. 1, 3, or 5a, the applications 180 or federated database 150 of FIG. 1 or 5a, as described above.

Block 708 illustrates that, in one embodiment, the partially virtual database may generate an aggregated database result associated with the business service, as described above. In various embodiments, the aggregated database result may include information provided by the at least one other application, as described above. In one embodiment, generating may include providing a database result that includes at least one of both a non-virtual field and a virtual field in a single database retrieval operation, as described above.

In various embodiments, the user of Block 702 may be associated with a security credential, as described above. In such an embodiment, generating an aggregated database result may include filtering the information provided by the at least one other application based upon the user's security credentials, as described above. In another embodiment, the filtering based upon the security credentials may occur at the consumer application or, in yet another embodiment, each of the other provider applications, as described above.

In some embodiments, the user's security credential may be associated with a tenant, and at least one of the at least one other applications may provide a multi-tenant business service, as described above. In such an embodiment, filtering information based upon the user's security credential may include not filtering a first set of information, provided by the

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at least one other application, that is common to all tenants of the multi-tenant business service, and filtering, based on the user's associated tenant, a second set of information, provided by the at least one other application, that is specific to individual tenants of the multi-tenant business service, as described above.

In various embodiments, one or more of the action(s) illustrated by this Block may be performed by the apparatuses or systems of FIG. 1, 3, or 5a, the applications 180 or federated database 150 of FIG. 1 or 5a, as described above.

Block 710 illustrates that, in one embodiment, an application may display at least a portion of the business service context regarding the business service based upon the aggregated database result, as described above. In various embodiments, one or more of the action(s) illustrated by this Block may be performed by the apparatuses or systems of FIG. 1, 3, or 5a, the application 120 of FIG. 1 or 5a, or the via the user interfaces 401, 402, and 403 of FIGS. 4a, 4b, and 4c, as described above.

Implementations of the various techniques described herein may be implemented in digital electronic circuitry, or in computer hardware, firmware, software, or in combinations of them. Implementations may be implemented as a computer program product, i.e., a computer program tangibly embodied in an information carrier, e.g., in a machine-readable storage device or in a propagated signal, for execution by, or to control the operation of, data processing apparatus, e.g., a programmable processor, a computer, or multiple computers. A computer program, such as the computer program(s) described above, can be written in any form of programming language, including compiled or interpreted languages, and can be deployed in any form, including as a stand-alone program or as a module, component, subroutine, or other unit suitable for use in a computing environment. A computer program can be deployed to be executed on one computer or on multiple computers at one site or distributed across multiple sites and interconnected by a communication network.

Method steps may be performed by one or more programmable processors executing a computer program to perform functions by operating on input data and generating output. Method steps also may be performed by, and an apparatus may be implemented as, special purpose logic circuitry, e.g., an FPGA (field programmable gate array) or an ASIC (application-specific integrated circuit).

Processors suitable for the execution of a computer program include, by way of example, both general and special purpose microprocessors, and any one or more processors of any kind of digital computer. Generally, a processor will receive instructions and data from a read-only memory or a random access memory or both. Elements of a computer may include at least one processor for executing instructions and one or more memory devices for storing instructions and data. Generally, a computer also may include, or be operatively coupled to receive data from or transfer data to, or both, one or more mass storage devices for storing data, e.g., magnetic, magneto-optical disks, or optical disks. Information carriers suitable for embodying computer program instructions and data include all forms of non-volatile memory, including by way of example semiconductor memory devices, e.g., EPROM, EEPROM, and flash memory devices; magnetic disks, e.g., internal hard disks or removable disks; magneto-optical disks; and CD-ROM and DVD-ROM disks. The processor and the memory may be supplemented by, or incorporated in special purpose logic circuitry.

To provide for interaction with a user, implementations may be implemented on a computer having a display device, e.g., a cathode ray tube (CRT) or liquid crystal display (LCD)

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monitor, for displaying information to the user and a keyboard and a pointing device, e.g., a mouse or a trackball, by which the user can provide input to the computer. Other kinds of devices can be used to provide for interaction with a user as well; for example, feedback provided to the user can be any form of sensory feedback, e.g., visual feedback, auditory feedback, or tactile feedback; and input from the user can be received in any form, including acoustic, speech, or tactile input.

Implementations may be implemented in a computing system that includes a back-end component, e.g., as a data server, or that includes a middleware component, e.g., an application server, or that includes a front-end component, e.g., a client computer having a graphical user interface or a Web browser through which a user can interact with an implementation, or any combination of such back-end, middleware, or front-end components. Components may be interconnected by any form or medium of digital data communication, e.g., a communication network. Examples of communication networks include a local area network (LAN) and a wide area network (WAN), e.g., the Internet.

While certain features of the described implementations have been illustrated as described herein, many modifications, substitutions, changes and equivalents will now occur to those skilled in the art. It is, therefore, to be understood that the appended claims are intended to cover all such modifications and changes as fall within the scope of the embodiments.

What is claimed is:

1. A method of using an application comprising:

receiving, by a processor of a computing device executing a host application, a request to display a business service context for a business service, the business service being an application or device within an Information Technology (IT) environment, the application associated with the business service including an application related to an email server, file server, Help-Desk application, a customer relationship management (CRM) application, or an automation application, the business service context including a plurality of attributes associated with the business service;

receiving, by a network interface of the computing device and from an at least partially virtual database, an aggregated database result regarding the business service, the at least partially virtual database including a storage portion having non-virtual fields and a cache having virtual fields associated with the plurality of attributes, the aggregated database result being an aggregation of virtual values from the virtual fields and non-virtual values from the non-virtual fields,

wherein the virtual values are received and temporally stored in the cache of at the at least partially virtual database from at least one of a plurality of business applications remote from the host application to be aggregated with the non-virtual values to form the aggregated database result, the virtual values including calculated performance metrics associated with the business service; and

displaying, within a context of the host business application, a graphical user interface element that displays the business service context including the virtual values and the non-virtual values of the aggregated database result associated with the plurality of attributes.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the non-virtual values include a description of the business service and identification of an owner associated with the business service, and the

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calculated performance metrics include a number of configuration items associated with the business service.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein displaying a graphical user interface element includes:

distilling the aggregated database result into a condensed set of information regarding the calculated performance metrics of the business service; and

displaying a summary view graphical user interface element that displays the condensed set of information regarding the calculated performance metrics of the business service,

wherein the summary view includes a service status indicator indicating an overall performance status of the business service.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein displaying a graphical user interface element includes:

displaying a first graphical user interface element that displays a first portion of information regarding the calculated performance metrics of the business service; and

in response to a request to display more information regarding at least one aspect of the business service, displaying a second graphical user interface element that displays a second portion of information regarding a more detailed version of the calculated performance metrics of the business service.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the first graphical user interface element includes a window that displays a Summary View of the business service context; and wherein the second graphical user interface element includes a window that displays a List View of items included in the second portion of the information.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein displaying a graphical user interface element includes:

displaying a set of required information regarding the business service, and displaying a set of optional information regarding the business service, wherein the set of optional information has been previously predefined.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein displaying a graphical user interface element includes:

evaluating the calculated performance metrics of the business service to determine if a value of the calculated performance metrics exceeds a predefined threshold, and if so, providing an indication on the graphical user interface that the calculated performance metrics has exceeded the threshold value.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein displaying a graphical user interface element includes:

displaying a business service linking user interface element that when selected causes a second business service context to be created and displayed, wherein the second business service context is associated with a second business service indicated by the business service linking user interface element.

9. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

defining a set of rules to filter information included by the business service context to be displayed upon receiving the business service context, and wherein displaying a graphical user interface element includes filtering the information to be displayed based upon the set of rules.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein the business service context is displayed in a standardized format regardless of a type of the host application.

11. A method of providing a business service context within a host application, the method comprising:

receiving a request to display a business service context of a business service, the business service being an application or device within an Information Technology (IT)

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environment, the application associated with the business service including an application related to an email server, file server, Help-Desk application, a customer relationship management (CRM) application, or an automation application, the business service context including a plurality of attributes associated with the business service;

accessing, via a network interface of a computing device, at least a partially virtual database to retrieve a database result that includes the business service context, the at least partially virtual database including a storage portion having non-virtual fields and a cache having virtual fields associated with the plurality of attributes;

querying, by the partially virtual database, at least one of a plurality of business applications remote from the host application for information regarding the business service, the information including virtual values to be temporally stored in the virtual fields of the cache of the at least partially virtual database, the virtual values including calculated performance metrics associated with the business service;

generating, by a processor associated with the at least partially virtual database, an aggregated database result associated with the business service, the aggregated database result being an aggregation of the virtual values from the virtual fields and non-virtual values from the non-virtual fields to form the aggregated database result; and

displaying, within a context of the host business application, the business service context regarding the business service including the virtual values and the non-virtual values of the aggregated database result associated with the plurality of attributes.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein the non-virtual values include a description of the business service and identification of an owner associated with the business service, and the calculated performance metrics include a number of configuration items associated with the business service.

13. The method of claim 11, wherein querying the plurality of business applications remote from the host application includes:

retrieving a list of other applications to query from a provider application registry in which the other applications have previously registered.

14. The method of claim 11, wherein the at least partially virtual database reads information regarding the business service from the plurality of business applications, the at least partially virtual database does not write the information regarding the business service from the plurality of business applications.

15. The method of claim 11, wherein receiving a request to display the business service context includes receiving a request that is associated with one or more security credentials, and wherein generating the aggregated database result includes filtering the information provided by the plurality of business applications based upon the security credentials.

16. A method of providing a business service context within a host application, the method comprising:

receiving a request to display a business service context of a business service, the business service being an application or device within an Information Technology (IT) environment, the business service context including a plurality of attributes associated with the business service;

accessing, via a network interface of a computing device, at least a partially virtual database to retrieve a database result that includes the business service context, the at

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least partially virtual database including a storage portion having non-virtual fields and a cache having virtual fields associated with the plurality of attributes; querying, by the partially virtual database, at least one of a plurality of business applications remote from the host application for information regarding the business service, the information including virtual values to be temporally stored in the virtual fields of the cache of the at least partially virtual database, the virtual values including calculated performance metrics associated with the business service, the querying includes, accessing each business application via a web services interface that produces formatted query results for the virtual values that are standardized to a single predetermined formatting scheme regardless of other applications queried; and adapting the virtual values to the virtual fields of the at least partially virtual database; generating, by a processor associated with the at least partially virtual database, an aggregated database result associated with the business service, the aggregated database result being an aggregation of the virtual values from the virtual fields and non-virtual values from the non-virtual fields to form the aggregated database result; and displaying, within a context of the host business application, the business service context regarding the business service including the virtual values and the non-virtual values of the aggregated database result associated with the plurality of attributes.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein querying the plurality of business applications remote from the host application includes:

- retrieving a list of other applications to query from a provider application registry in which the other applications have previously registered.

18. The method of claim 16, wherein the at least partially virtual database reads information regarding the business service from the plurality of business applications, the at least partially virtual database does not write the information regarding the business service from the plurality of business applications.

19. The method of claim 16, wherein receiving a request to display the business service context includes receiving a request that is associated with one or more security credentials, and wherein generating the aggregated database result includes filtering the information provided by the plurality of business applications based upon the security credentials.

20. The method of claim 16, wherein the non-virtual values include a description of the business service and identification of an owner associated with the business service, and the calculated performance metrics include a number of configuration items associated with the business service.

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21. A computer program product for displaying a business service context on a host application, the computer program product being tangibly embodied on a non-transitory computer-readable medium and including executable code that, when executed, is configured to cause at least one processor to:

- receive a request to display a business service context regarding a business service, the business service being an application or device within an Information Technology (IT) environment, the application associated with the business service including an application related to an email server, file server, Help-Desk application, a customer relationship management (CRM) application, or an automation application, the business service context including a plurality of attributes associated with the business service;

- receive, from a database, an aggregated database result regarding the business service, the database including a storage portion having non-virtual fields and a cache having virtual fields associated with the plurality of attributes, the aggregated database result being an aggregation of virtual values from the virtual fields and non-virtual values from the non-virtual fields, wherein the virtual values are received and temporally stored in the cache of the database from at least one of a plurality of business applications remote from the host application to be aggregated with the non-virtual values to form the aggregated database result, the virtual values including calculated performance metrics associated with the business service; and

- display a graphical user interface element that displays the business service context including the virtual values and non-virtual values of the aggregated database result associated with the plurality of attributes.

22. The computer program product of claim 21, wherein the non-virtual values include a description of the business service and identification of an owner associated with the business service, and the calculated performance metrics include a number of configuration items associated with the business service.

23. The computer program product of claim 21, wherein the executable code causes the at least one processor to:

- display a first graphical user interface element that displays a first portion of information regarding the calculated performance metrics of the business service; and

- in response to a request to view more information regarding at least one aspect of the business service, display a second graphical user interface element that displays a second portion of information regarding a more detailed version of the calculated performance metrics of the business service.

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